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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; IRAQ; TURKEY; UPCOMING ARGENTINE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS; 07/25/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Key international stories include a US military report advising troop withdrawal from Iraq begin in the summer of 2009; implications of Turkish parliamentary elections; and speculation about the outcome of upcoming Argentine presidential elections.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "The US is reported to withdraw its troops from Iraq by mid-2009"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (07/26) "While the White House, Democrats and Republicans are holding a tough political debate on the future of Iraq, the US military and diplomatic command in Baghdad concluded that troops should stay there for the next two years.

"According to The New York Times, the conclusion is part of the Campaign Joint Plan drafted by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, which is intended to fight insurgents and train Iraqi security forces until the summer of 2009, when a gradual withdrawal could be ordered.

"While the proposal was received with caution and pessimism by the Democratic opposition, it advanced the White House line that withdrawal be postponed to give time to the Iraqi government to improve the situation.

"Yesterday, US President George W. Bush intended to strengthen Americans' fading support for the war and win time for Crocker and Petraeus, although he did this by making another disputed connection between the mastermind of the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda and the combat in Iraq."

- Turkey confirms its direction"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (07/25) editorializes "Turkey does not belong to the European Union, although its elections often have an impact on the continent both because of the possibility that it could become an EU member and because it is a Muslim country. This is why last Sunday's parliamentary elections took on special meaning, in which the government's political party had a landslide victory.

"... During recent years, the country grew at a steady annual average rate of 7.4 percent, which lit up some hope for its difficult entry into the EU. However, this light of hope was clouded by the fact that the new French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, along with other European leaders, did not support the idea.

"... The outcome of elections demonstrated that just a few believed that (PM) Erdogan could have a secret agenda and, even less that he would want to get rid of Atat|rk's legacy. Turning the country in favor of Islamic fundamentalism could imply some contradiction (rather than a retreat) with the current administration and it could jeopardize civil and political freedoms, particularly those of women."

- "The future raises more uncertainty than the election process itself"

Business-financial "El Cronista" carries an opinion piece by pollster Manuel Mora y Araujo, who opines (07/25) "... Even with a positive macroeconomic atmosphere and favorable international trends, and in spite of the extraordinary relief represented by the remarkable primary fiscal surplus achieved by the country during recent years, the years ahead will be difficult and socially conflictive. Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner will surely be elected president, although she will not take over in a honeymoon framework, as her husband enjoyed during the first three years of his term in office."

"From now to October, the opposition will surely continue saying that everything is chaos and conditions are on the verge of collapse. The official party will possibly continue as though nothing is happening. And probably the current election trends will remain as they are. However, a new stage will start on December 11, which will compel both the ruling party and opponents to tune in to reality - otherwise, the public will probably turn against them."

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